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SUBJECT: SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON NORTH KIVU'S IDP  
SITUATION

REF: A. KINSHASA 310

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 201

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Contrary to recent press reports, there have been no major displacement of civilians in North Kivu province following operations against the FDLR. Humanitarian and MONUC officials say, in fact, there have been relatively few new IDPs there since late April. Those displaced since January 2007 total some 113,000 and include those fleeing in expectation of an offensive against the FDLR, the deployment of "mixed" brigades in the province, and fighting between local Mayi-Mayi militia. Officials estimate there are approximately 190,000 who remain displaced since December [1](#)2006. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Recent press reports have claimed a massive movement of as many as 600,000 civilians in North Kivu following the start of Congolese military (FARDC) operations against the FDLR. Humanitarian and MONUC officials on the ground say otherwise. In fact, there have been few new IDPs registered since the offensive began in late April. Patrick Lavand'homme, the OCHA director for North Kivu, told us May 9 his agency had not seen any massive displacements in the previous three weeks. MONUC spokesman Kemal Saiki told us May 15 there have been at most 30,000 displaced in the last month.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Lavand'homme and others said, though, that approximately 113,000 new persons were registered as displaced between January and April for several reasons. First, many fled in anticipation of military operations against the FDLR in the North Kivu territory of Rutshuru. Second, the deployment of several "mixed" brigades caused fear among some locals, who believed the forces loyal to dissident General Laurent Nkunda in these units -- who had recently been fighting government forces in these same regions -- would commit exactions against those who had opposed them. In fact, some displacement did occur because of violations committed by certain "mixed" brigade troops, notably Bravo Brigade in Rutshuru. Finally, fighting in March and April between opposing factions of the region's Mayi-Mayi (local defense forces) caused others to flee as well. All three factors contributed to North Kivu's IDP problem before the FARDC offensive against the FDLR began April 24.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In addition to those displaced between January and April, IDPs remain from fighting that occurred in Sake and Rutshuru territory in November and December 2006 between the FARDC and elements loyal to Nkunda. Some 130,000 were displaced during that fighting, although 80,000 had returned to their homes by the end of January; approximately 50,000 are still displaced. This wave of IDPs, added to those from January-April, and those displaced after the late April

offensive against the FDLR, creates a total number of around 190,000 IDPs in the past six months. Lavand'homme and Saiki both told us this is the most accurate figure to use when discussing the most recent waves of IDPs.

15. (SBU) The figure of 600,000 is technically accurate but misleading. As reported reftels, there remain several hundred thousand long-term IDPs in North Kivu who have been displaced for several years as a result of constant insecurity. Many are actually located in the northern part of the province, far from the current fighting against the FDLR. Humanitarian officials have said the total number of IDPs is closer to 550,000, and they show no sign of crossing the borders into Uganda or Rwanda in massive numbers.

16. (SBU) SRSR William Swing, on a visit to the province May 12 to review the current environment, said no one could be satisfied with the situation in North Kivu. Noting the frustration of the local population, Swing said MONUC would continue to protect civilians and provide security, allowing humanitarian groups to reach those in need. Lavand'homme said he feared that continued operations against the FDLR could worsen the situation, making it even more difficult for relief workers to access affected areas.

17. (SBU) Comment: Figures regarding the number of IDPs should be put in the context of North Kivu, which has for many years seen significant displacements of populations followed by their return several weeks or months later. The current situation is cause for some concern as humanitarian conditions worsen and security deteriorates. If military operations continue as expected, these displacements will continue, most likely in larger numbers and for longer

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periods. Declarations of "hundreds of thousands" of IDPs should also be viewed in light of the tendency of donor conferences -- like the recent ones held by humanitarian agencies in Geneva -- to inflate the numbers. End comment.  
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